

SPECTRUM

Pride

SUICIDE: A SAD PRICE TO PAY FOR BEING GAY, LESBIAN OR BISEXUAL
by J.

We live in a society that is slowly coming to terms with the issues of homosexuality and bisexuality. Some affirmative aspects of the growing homosexual and bisexual movement that began with the Stonewall Riots of 1969 have occurred, yet despite many positive achievements, there are still some negative issues that need to be dealt with. One great concern, is the state of a number of gay or bisexual men and women who, through various circumstances, contemplate and/or attempt suicide. Suicide is a wilful self-destructive act, often acted upon in a negative emotional state; due to circumstances that are perceived as beyond the control of the individual. Suicide occurs in all walks of life, but in terms of sexual orientation, brings about certain particulars that may be pertinent only to homosexual and bisexual individuals. However, it is clear that one cannot generalize all homosexual or bisexual people under the categories of suicidal impulses. Many of the individuals who are gay or bisexual and have thought of/attempted suicide, tend to not be "out" to themselves and/or others, or do not have the social support networks and positive coping skills that many gay, lesbian and bisexual individuals acquire.

Suicide among gay and bisexual youth is a major concern in the Health and Welfare sections of Canada. Statistics cite various findings of suicide rates among lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered youth; from an incidence level three to six times greater than suicide findings among heterosexual youth. Several studies have reported incidences as high as 30% (Gibson, 1989; Remafedi, 1987) or even 42% (D'Augelli & Hershberger, 1993). There are several themes that occur within the context of suicide and sexual orientation that may lead to suicidal ideas, thoughts and attempts.

One theme that occurs with great frequency among gay and bisexual youth and the older population, is the issue of self-awareness, self-acceptance and stressors from family and friends in terms of being gay or bisexual. Occasionally, a motivating factor in suicide stems from self-hatred; a person's socialization to negative perceptions from society, may cause distress and hatred when they understand that they may be homosexual or bisexual. Instead of lashing out at other gay/bisexual men and women (i.e. homophobia) some turn their loathing and disgust on themselves and often attempt suicide. In terms of coming out, often individuals who have come out to peers and family members, are subjected to a barrage of verbal and sometimes physical abuse. Some are thrown out of the house, a few are forced to attend counseling in "hopes" of "curing" their sexual orientation, and many are harassed and subjected to tremendous pressure from family and peers to be "normal". Peer and familial rejection can place tremendous stress on gay and bisexual youth through the lack of support, perceived "End of the World" and/or rejection of the individual due to her/his sexual orientation. As a result of these stressors, many lesbian, gay and bisexual youth turn to self-destructive behaviours, such as substance abuse, running away, prostitution, internalized homophobia or suicide.

A second theme within the framework of suicide and sexual orientation, focuses on the stressors that quite a few gay and bisexual individuals have when faced with the issue of AIDS and HIV. The AIDS epidemic has placed a great amount of stress on many people, but of major consequence, is the perception of many people that AIDS and HIV are inextricably linked to homosexuality and bisexuality. For those who are HIV+ or AIDS+, the stress of living with an eventually fatal disease, coupled with the stigmatization from society, feelings of isolation, the lack of support and the lack of proper health care services, often is too much for them. From this point of view, suicide appears to be a better state than living.

What can be done about this concern? Suicide can be prevented through various methods, such as individuals and their family/peers building a positive social support network, talking with counselors about sexual orientation, obtaining a better understanding of homosexuality and bisexuality through information and attending such organizations as PFLAG. One can also look out for possible suicide "hints" in friends or family who are coming to terms with their homosexuality or bisexuality like: consistent discussions about death and suicide, giving away personal items, depressed and despondent moods, not participating in activities that were once enjoyed and so on. There is a need to discuss and concern ourselves with suicide within all populations, but especially within the homosexual and bisexual population, who have largely been ignored and not understood. The particulars of growing up gay or bisexual often lend themselves to many negative perceptions within a few individuals, whose only (perceived) course of action, is suicide. People need to understand that this is happening due to negative perceptions within our society, and that changes must be undertaken in order to create a more tolerant atmosphere for the generations to come.

Blood n' Thunder

is involved. It seems whenever an individual in our house is brought into question for his actions, your publication drags Safe Walk into the mud. We in Neill are not responsible for everyone's actions inside our house, therefore the public and the media should not judge or condemn the "residence that advocates personal safety and operates a program such as Safe Walk." I realize in the article that some positive publicity is given to our program, and I, as well as all of the men and women of Safe Walk, appreciate it, but it is just under the WRONG title. ...Perhaps a separate article could have been written, and a little more judgement could be used. To clarify a few points and possibly silence the critics of Neill Safe Walk, I will provide some statistics of the program:

-Between September 6th and November 12th, 1995, Safe Walk has done 123 walks, all with no complaints that I am aware of;

- 1995 is the first year the service is co-ed, with 40 applicants from Tibbits and Lady Dunn;
- the program runs dusk to dawn, 7 days a week;
- each volunteer male and female, went through a screening interview) and there are 75 volunteers in total;
- the accused was not an active member of the Neill Safe Walk program;
- the number to call is 453-4830.

The Knights of Neill began this service to try to make a small contribution to the safety of our fellow students and staff of UNB and STU. We have a lot of pride in our house and Safe Walk, and we will continue to serve to the best of our abilities. Vincere vel mori.

Thank you for your interest, Mat Trevors, Neill Safe Walk Co-ordinator

Letters to the Editor
can be dropped off at rm 35 of the SUB. We just want your comments. So write a wrong or sing a praise while your pen is hot.

The Left Job

What is Socialism?

Most people's ideas of what socialism would be like are dominated by the Stalinist tyranny in Russia or the experiences of NDP or other 'left-wing' governments. That is, they view socialism as either the control of all social life by a bureaucratic and oppressive state or as the status quo modified by a few reforms and somewhat more state intervention.

In the face of these uninspiring alternatives it is tempting to embark on a detailed account of how life would be organized in a genuinely socialist society. In fact Marxists, beginning with Marx himself, have resisted the temptation to draw up a blueprint for socialism as pointless and misleading. If the future society is to be truly socialist, then its details can be decided only by the workers who build it.

Consequently, Marxists have limited themselves to the statement of certain general principles which could be scientifically derived from the study of ends and forces at work under capitalism. These principles clearly differentiate the Marxist conception of socialism from its Stalinist and reformist corruptions.

For Marxists, the fundamental aim of socialism is the creation of a classless society. This is not a single act but a lengthy social process which begins under capitalism. Its starting point is the tendency of capitalism to develop the

forces of production (i.e. to raise the productivity of labour and to concentrate the means of production in larger units).

Secondly, capitalism produces its own grave digger, the working class, which grows with the growth of capital.

The first step, the decisive breakthrough to socialism, comes with the conquest of political power by the working class; that is, with the destruction of the capitalist state apparatus and the establishment of a workers' state — what Marx called the dictatorship of the proletariat. By this he meant not a dictatorship over the working class but the direction of society by the working class itself. Looking at the Paris Commune of 1871, Marx specified mechanisms through which this could be achieved: the replacement of the parliamentary talk shop by a working body; the election and recallability of all state officials; no official to earn more than a skilled worker's wage; abolition of the standing army and formation of a workers' militia. The Russian revolution showed us the organisational form of workers' power — the soviet or workers' council — which arises directly from working-class struggle.

Following the consolidation of its state power and the defeat of the inevitable capitalist attempts at counter-revolution, the working class has to secure the transition to a fully socialist, classless society.

The working class will use its power to take all important industries and

businesses into social ownership and place them under workers' control. All the working population will be drawn into administering the new society. This will make democratic planning of the economy possible, ensuring an enormous growth in the wealth of society and that this growth serves people's needs.

It will liberate women by establishing their complete legal equality and by socialising the burden of housework and child care so that this formal equality becomes reality. It will free society from the stains of racial, sexual and national bigotry.

It will use the enormous advances of modern science and technology to eliminate the dangers and drudgery of work. It will systematically reduce the working week and simultaneously raise the educational and cultural level of the people. This will pave the way for the disappearance of any group of privileged experts and for overcoming the divisions between mental and manual labour. It will steadily widen the range of goods and services available free of charge — a process leading to the disappearance of money and to distribution on the principle, 'each according to their needs'.

All this must be done in conjunction with spreading the revolution internationally. We know from the Russian experience that the transition to socialism cannot be completed in one country.

Once this has been achieved and capitalism has been destroyed worldwide, the immense resources of our planet will be harnessed for the peoples' needs. The state will wither away for lack of anyone to repress or privilege to protect. A new epoch of human history will open — the epoch of real freedom for a united humanity.

If anyone is interested in discussing this or other relevant issues, please contact Chris at 454-9233 for the UNB Socialists' Club next meeting.

Metanoia by John Walk

Threshold of Hope

John Paul II is a "writing Pope." He authors Papal Encyclicals, writes novels, even participates in scripting movies. His latest endeavour is *Crossing the Threshold of Hope* (1994).

Written with journalist Viterio Messori, *Crossing the Threshold of Hope* was initially intended as an interview for Italian Radio and Television. It was to be broadcast around the world on October 1993, the fifteenth anniversary of John Paul's papacy.

The Pope's hectic schedule prevented the interview. The questions Messori had submitted beforehand, however, intrigued him: "you have asked me questions, therefore you have a right to responses. ... I am working on them. I will let you have them. Then do with them what you think is appropriate." On April 1994 Messori was handed a big white envelope containing John Paul's responses. Also, on the cover of the folder containing the manuscript was a suggested title. Messori kept the title exactly as written.

This book breathes the human warmth, personality and concern of John Paul II. He is a pope who "looks for every means to spread the Good News." He wants to "shout from the rooftops (today crowded with television antennas) that there is hope." As Messori states in the preface, "in such a climate all abstractions vanish. Dogma becomes flesh, blood, life. The theologian becomes witness and shepherd."

In *Crossing the Threshold of Hope* we encounter deep religious conviction — conviction not fearing journalism's hard questions. These questions include "The Pope: A Scandal and a Mystery," "Does God Really Exist?" "If God Exists, Why is He Hiding?" "Is Jesus the Son of God?" "Why is There so Much Evil in the World?" "Why Does God Tolerate Suffering?" "What Does 'To Save' Mean?" "Why So Many Religions?" Each of these, and there are more, forms a chapter in the book.

Most, if not all, of our information about the Pope comes via the media.

There we see/read of the Pope's global escapades, touching the hearts and souls of millions of people. We also see/read that he is down on women, birth control, abortion, married clergy, etc. Media images are very powerful. When the latter images are disproportionately high, or dominate, confidence in our religious faith may erode.

John Paul's responses to the questions of journalist Messori are not exhaustive. They are not even the last word. But neither are they media sound bites. Instead, they are a message of hope. That hope, according to John Paul II, and numerous other Christians, Catholics and Protestants alike, "has been confirmed:

it is offered to whoever wants to accept it."

In a day when so many despair — about life, work, church — hope is so desperately needed. But our hope lies not in this world, asserts John Paul. It is ultimately in nothing this world can offer; neither materialism, power, status, nor control. Our hope lies only in God.

The firm conviction of all Christians is that God "dwelt among us" (Immanuel) in Jesus Christ. We will get no clearer understanding of God, on this side of eternity, than that given in and by this person, as recorded in the Judeo-Christian Scriptures. It is now only for us to believe, experience, and journey with it. Reading John Paul II's *Crossing the Threshold of Hope* is one place to start.

WOMEN

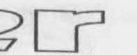
Arise, all women who have hearts, whether your baptism be that of water or tears!

Say firmly "We will not have great questions decided by irrelevant agencies We will be too tender of those of another country to allow our sons to be trained to injure theirs!"

- Julia Ward Howe, 1819-1910

Submissions for SPECTRUM

can be given to the Editor-in-Chief. All you need to do is write up three samples of your proposed column and we'll talk. By the way, if you have any ideas for Spectrum don't forget to send those in too.



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